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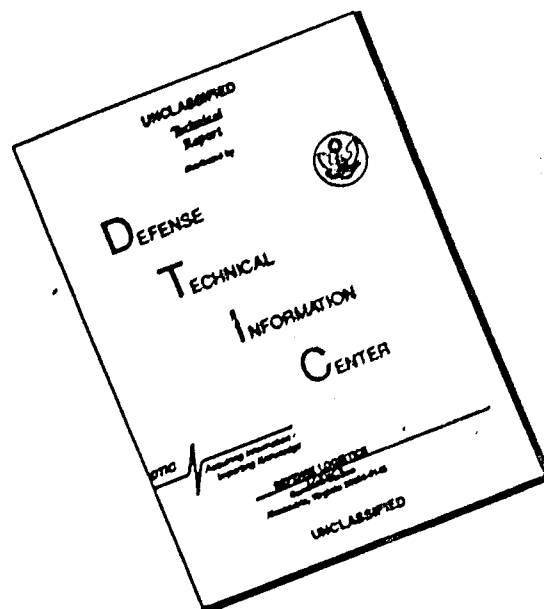
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

IN REPLY REFER TO

AGAM-P (M) (24 Feb 69) FOR OT UT 684164 28 February 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 554th
Engineer Battalion (Construction), Period Ending 31
October 1968

AD848941

SEE DISTRIBUTION

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2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Kenneth G. Wickham

KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

1 Incl
as

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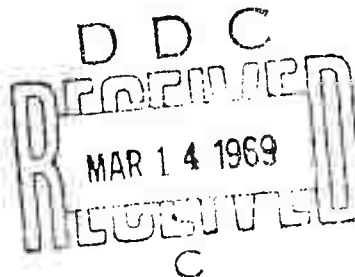
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 554TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONSTRUCTION)
APO US Forces 96353

EBC-80

9 November 1968

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)
for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

THRU: Commanding Officer
79th Engineer Group
ATTN: EEL-3
APO 96491

Commanding General
20th Engineer Brigade
ATTN: AVBI-05
APO 96491

Commanding General
United States Army, Vietnam
ATTN: AVICG-DST
APO 96375

Commanding General
United States Army Pacific
ATTN: GPOP-OT
APO 96588

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army (ACSFOR DA)
Washington, D.C. 20310

FOR OT UT
684164
Inclosure

EBC-CO

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)
for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

I. Section 1: Operations: Significant Activities.

a. General:

(1) During the period 1 August 1968 to 31 October 1968 the 554th Engineer Battalion (Const) was heavily engaged in engineer support of the 25th Infantry Division and other free world military forces in its area of operations. The period was marked by heavy commitment to Operational support missions and LOC construction. The remainder of battalion effort was devoted to MACV Advisors Housing and base camp construction.

(2) On 25 August 1968 the battalion received the 104th Dump Truck Company as an attachment. The battalion also received an equipment packet and operators from the 362nd Light Engineer Company in August. The 113th Engineer Detachment (C&P) was detached on 8 September. The Battalion changed to TO & L 5-117 G on 25 October 1968. These changes increased the battalion's rock, sand, and contract asphalt and thus assisted paving operations on RSH QL-1. Sand, rock and contract asphalt were hauled regularly. The loss of the 113th Engineer Detachment greatly reduced the concrete production capability of this battalion. A batch plant utilizing two 16-S mixers was established on 19 October 1968, and now effectively serves units at Cu Chi on a self help basis.

(3) On 30 September 1968 the 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction) received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for service from 14 April 1967 to 14 February 1968.

b. Command:

During the period covered in this report LTC Charles L. McNeill assumed command of the battalion from LTC Joe H. Sheard. Major Charles S. Mills Jr. remained Battalion Executive Officer. Captain Boyden Gabell remained in command of A Company. Captain Earle Cheal assumed command of Company B. LT John Vaughn remained in command of Company C. Captain Emery Chase assumed command of Company D. LT Gerald Rutland remained in command of the 104th Dump Truck Company. Major Henry Pfeil served as S-3 for a period of 30 days and then was reassigned to 79th Engineer Group S-4. Major William M. Toskey was assigned as Battalion S-3. Captain William Seale replaced Captain Chase as S-4 and was then reassigned to 79th Engineer Group S-4, 30 days later. LT Phillip Cascio assumed duties as S-4.

c. Personnel, Administration and Morale:

(1) During the past quarter the battalion maintained a six day week for operations. Sunday mornings were devoted to religious services and personal time. Sunday afternoons were devoted to training, maintenance and work on high priority projects.

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(2) Court Martial and Non Judicial Punishment rates decreased during the quarter. There were 79 Article 15's and 8 Court martials. 1 case of AWOL was reported and 8 Congressional Inquiries were received.

(3) From 1 August 1968 to 31 October 1968 personnel in the battalion were awarded 13 Purple Hearts, 14 Bronze Stars and 12 Army Commendation medals.

(4) Troop morale remained high during the reporting period. Clubs were in operation in the battalion area after duty hours. The battalion received 64 R and R allocations in August, 54 in September and 61 in October.

(5) Character Guidance statistics were well within the 20th Engineer Brigade goals. Chaplain Baldwin established a program where platoon leaders would teach character guidance and thus insure better coverage. A seminar program was set up where the Chaplain discussed the monthly topic with instructors and thus insured quality instruction.

d. Logistics:

(1) Significant logistical problems were encountered especially when four operational support missions were received all of which required welding, MB41 matting and reinforcing bar. The large quantities of materials required were not on hand as a stockage level is not authorized. The situation then arose where materials were issued to the high priority jobs from jobs that were lower priority but had approved BOM's and supply action already taken. The barrage of USM projects created turmoil in supply channels and did not allow proper lead time for requisitioning purposes.

(2) During the period the battalion supply section handled 26,116 tons of class II and IV materials. 292,645 gallons of class III were used and 1,891 rounds of small arms ammunition were expended.

e. Training:

The entire battalion training program was upgraded this period. A battalion training SOP was established. A Master Training Schedule was set up at battalion level. Training schedules were closely monitored with emphasis on OJT, equipment maintenance and mandatory subjects. Battalion sponsored training included mine sweep retraining and counter ambush training. Considerable effort was made to insure all replacements attended the 25th Infantry Division Replacement Training Course. Company SOP's were checked to insure that all new personnel received proper orientation. Training inspections by battalion inspectors were conducted weekly.

f. Command Management:

(1) Sundry Fund:

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SUBJECT: Operational Report of 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)
for Period Ending 31 October 1968, MCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

The consolidated Sundry Fund was divided into 3 separate funds, En Club, NCO Club, and Officer's fund.

(2) Voluntary Informant Program.

One mine was purchased this quarter for 1500 piasters by Company C working on the LOC.

(3) Inspector General:

A reinspection of battalion and company unsatisfactory areas was conducted from 10 September 1968 to 14 September 1968. All unsatisfactory areas were classed satisfactory.

g. Operations:

(1) Operational Support: On 19 August 1968 the battalion completed hardening the MOUT Hospital at Tay Ninh. Prefabricated M8A1 revetments were used to protect the rubber operating suites. This project was completed on 20 August 1968.

The taxiway and ramps for the 242nd Assault Helicopter Company were repaired beginning 17 August. The old matting was removed, subgrade reworked, a two inch lift of asphalt placed and the matting was relaid. Project was completed on 20 October.

Parking area preparation for the 116th Assault Helicopter Company was underway. Over 68,000 cubic yards of fill has been brought in to raise the area to grade prior to beginning construction of revetments.

A catwalk under the Phu Cuong Bridge was started on 14 October. Clearance necessary of navigation purposes was twenty feet from high water mark to the catwalk. The center span of the catwalk was eliminated in order to meet this specification. At the completion of the period the catwalk was 45% complete.

On 20 September emergency repair of the Cu Chi Runway was initiated. 500 linear feet of Ari-2 matting runway was removed, subgrade reworked utilizing soil cement stabilization and matting replaced. See inclosure for special techniques and equipment.

On 3 October work began on OV-10 revetments at Cu Chi. Four revetments of 8 required were needed on a priority basis to protect the first four OV-10 aircraft assigned to Cu Chi. All available battalion welders were employed in this project to construct the 50 foot square metal revetments. The battalion's maintenance program has suffered by the loss of these welders.

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for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

On 4 October work began to upgrade the 12th Evacuation Hospital facilities. The battalion constructed 10, 30 man bunkers. Slabs were placed for maintenance and utilities buildings, a dust off helipad was implaced using asphalt pavement and work continued on improving both interior and exterior drainage.

(2) LOC Construction: Approaches to the Cau Ba Bep continued to be surcharged. The approaches appeared to have stabilized and both approaches were paved.

The battalion paved approximately 6 kilometers on QL-1 north west of Cu Chi during the past quarter. Repair work continued along both TL-8A and QL-1. Repairs ranged from filling craters caused by enemy interdictions to implacing culverts where high water had destroyed the road.

(3) Base Camp Construction: On 1 September the battalion began construction of a Command Building for the 25th Infantry Division. This facility was designed and constructed by battalion personnel utilizing both troop and local national labor. Facility was completed on 24 September.

The Division Tactical Operation Center was started on 12 August. The extensive concrete pour required a major effort from the entire battalion. A change in Division Commanders between design approval and actual construction brought about many field changes in design during construction.

On 9 August construction was initiated on an air conditioned laboratory at the 12th Evacuation Hospital. This project stopped several times awaiting materials and higher priority jobs. Presently the facility is nearing completion.

During this period the battalion completed construction of a 20x48 bil-
lot and a 150 square foot shower/latrine for MACV personnel at Duc Lap.

Also under construction are facilities at Bao Trai for MACV personnel. These include a 20x48 bil-
lot, a helipad, water well and water distribution system. Presently only the water distribution system remains to be completed.

The site support for Cu Chi Power Plant was held up for a long period because of wet conditions. Whenever possible the battalion devoted all earthmoving effort to this high priority task.

The Cu Chi Communications Center neared completion during the reporting period. It was discovered that a 35 ton air conditioning unit was installed when design called for a 20 ton unit. Presently duct work is being redesigned to be compatible with the 35 ton unit.

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Cantonment program construction at Cu Chi was extremely limited because a shortage of lumber for construction. The battalion continued to pour pads in the priority designated by the Installation Coordinator.

On 20 August a parking lot was paved at the IWCS site at Cu Chi. This completed battalion efforts for that project.

A concrete pad was placed on 9 September for the 116th Assault Helicopter Maintenance Hangar. This project had to be stopped for higher priority project.

During the period one 10 family ARVN dependent housing unit was delivered to Duc Hoa.

EBC-CO

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)
for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

Section II: Lessons Learned: Commanders Observations, Evaluation and Recommendations:

1. Personnel:

OBSERVATION: Many units in USARV reduce their rotational hump months without any consideration for the preferences of the individual concerned. In most cases an A & B roster of personnel with DEROS's during a rotational hump month is provided to the next higher headquarters and subsequently a levy by name and MOS is returned to the unit for infusion.

EVALUATION: Infusion of personnel is necessary to reduce the personnel turbulence created by a rotational hump month and provide continuity of operations in an organization.

RECOMMENDATION: That personnel be apprized of the USARV Infusion Program. This was accomplished in this battalion by an orientation conducted at company level by the battalion personnel officer to all personnel with a DEROS during the month of the rotational hump (April 69). The two alternatives being to encourage extensions out of the month of April or to infuse personnel out of the month. Over eighty requests for extensions of various periods were received within two weeks of the orientation. Many personnel did not want to extend nor did they desire to be infused to another unit. On the other hand there were people who did not want to extend and did not mind being infused. When at all possible upon receipt of infusion levies special attention should be given to personal considerations to honor preferences where possible.

It is believed that this "personal effort" will provide this organization with personnel that are more desirous of being members of the 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction) and will consequently enhance the morale and efficiency of this battalion.

2. Operations:

OBSERVATION: Excessive spill occurs when filling metal revetments with overburden.

EVALUATION: A hopper type assembly is necessary.

RECOMMENDATION: When filling revetments made of MSA1 matting, straighten out the connecting ears of a panel and hook the panel into the top piece of matting. Raise the panel to 45° angle from horizontal and brace with 4x4's. Thus a hopper is constructed to fill revetments.

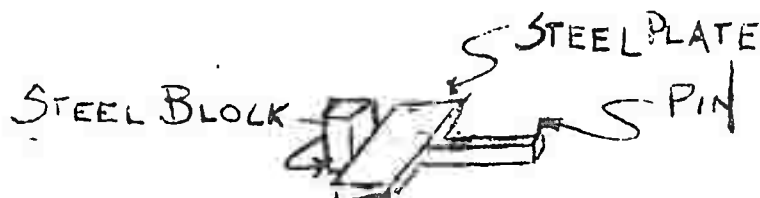
OBSERVATION: Difficulty in removing and driving pins in MSA1 matting.

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for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

EVALUATION: A fabricated pin driver can be effective in this operation.

RECOMMENDATION: Weld a solid steel block onto an old M8A1 pin and also weld a piece of steel plate to the pin to allow the plate to ride on the ridges. This greatly expedites pin driving and removal.



OBSERVATION: Repair of blown culverts.

EVALUATION: It is mandatory to maintain one lane passable traffic on the MSR's while repairing culverts. It is most difficult to join a buried section of culvert to a newly emplaced section.

RECOMMENDATION: Whenever possible every effort should be made to replace an entire length of culvert at once. If an AVLB is available, demolition should be used to loosen the remaining section of culvert and fill material. Loose material is then cleaned out, an AVLB placed and the entire length of culvert placed beneath the AVLB. The cut is then filled and the AVLB removed. The road remains passable the entire time. The entire repair can be accomplished in about 60% of the time required to repair using the conventional method.

3. Training: None

4. Intelligence: None

5. Logistics:

OBSERVATION: Frequent deadline of organic cranes.

EVALUATION: It is necessary to find substitute repair parts.

RECOMMENDATION: The 20 ton American Hoist and Derrick Crane uses the same fan belts as the Gray Model 251-437 Lubricator, FSN of the belt is 3030-278-1670. It was also noted that the compressor belt of a 20 ton crane, Quickway model M-200 can be used as a substitute for the compressor belt of an American Hoist and Derrick 20 ton Crane. Compressor belt FSN is 3030-528-5078.

OBSERVATION: Brake fluid in carburetors of M37B1 trucks (3/4 ton)

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for Period ending 31 October 1968, ACS CEFOR-65 (M)

EVALUATION: Brake fluid runs up the breather tube into the carburetor and cylinders when bleeding brakes with a pressurized ball bleeder.

RECOMMENDATION: Insure deep water fording valve is closed when utilizing the pressurized ball bleeder. This will stop the brake fluid problem.


OBSERVATION: Opening drums of AP3 for asphalt plant operation.

EVALUATION: Method of opening drums with an air hammer forces reliance on an air compressor being available.

RECOMMENDATION: An electric hammer modified with a 1½" sharpened cutting edge can be effectively used to open 55 gallon drums.

6. Organization: None

7. Other: None


CHARLES L. McNEILL
LTC, CE
Commanding

5 Incls

Organization Chart

~~After Action Report, 242nd ASMO~~

~~After Action Report, Phu Quong (Part II)~~

~~After Action Report, Emergency Repair Su Chi Airfield~~

~~After Action Report, MUST Hospital Revetments.~~

Incl 2 - 5 wd Hq DA, not published

ECE-CO (9 Nov 68) 1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report of 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)
for Period Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 79TH ENGINEER GROUP, APO 96491, 21 November 1968

TO: Commanding Officer, 20th Engineer Brigade, ATTN: AVBI-OS, APO 96491

The Operational Report of the 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction) for the period ending 31 October 1968 has been reviewed. It is considered to be an accurate summary of the battalion's operational experience during that period.

Richard L. West

RICHARD L. WEST
Colonel, CE
Commanding


AVBI-OS (9 Nov 68) 2nd Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, RCS CSFOR-65(RL) for
Quarterly Period Ending 31 October 1968

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 20th Engineer Brigade, APO 96491 11 DEC 68

TO: Commanding General, United States Army Vietnam,
ATTN: AVHEN-MO, APO 96375

1. Submitted in accordance with USARV Regulation 525-15, dated 13 April 1968.
2. Subject Report for the 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction) has been reviewed and is considered adequate.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


RICHARD E. TAYLOR
1LT, AGC
Assistant Adjutant


AVHGC-DST (9 Nov 68) 3d Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned, RCS CSFOR-65(R1) for
Quarterly Period Ending 31 October 1968

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT,
APO 96558

This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned
for the quarterly period ending 31 October 1968 from Headquarters,
554th Engineer Battalion and concurs with the report.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


F. S. TAYLOR, JR.
Major General
Asst. to the Commander, General

Cy furn:
HQ 20th Engr Bde
HQ 554th Engr Bn

GPOP-DT (9 Nov 68) 4th Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 554th Engr Bn (Const) for Period
Ending 31 October 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 30 JAN 1969

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

This headquarters has evaluated subject report and forwarding indorse-
ments and concurs in the report as indorsed.

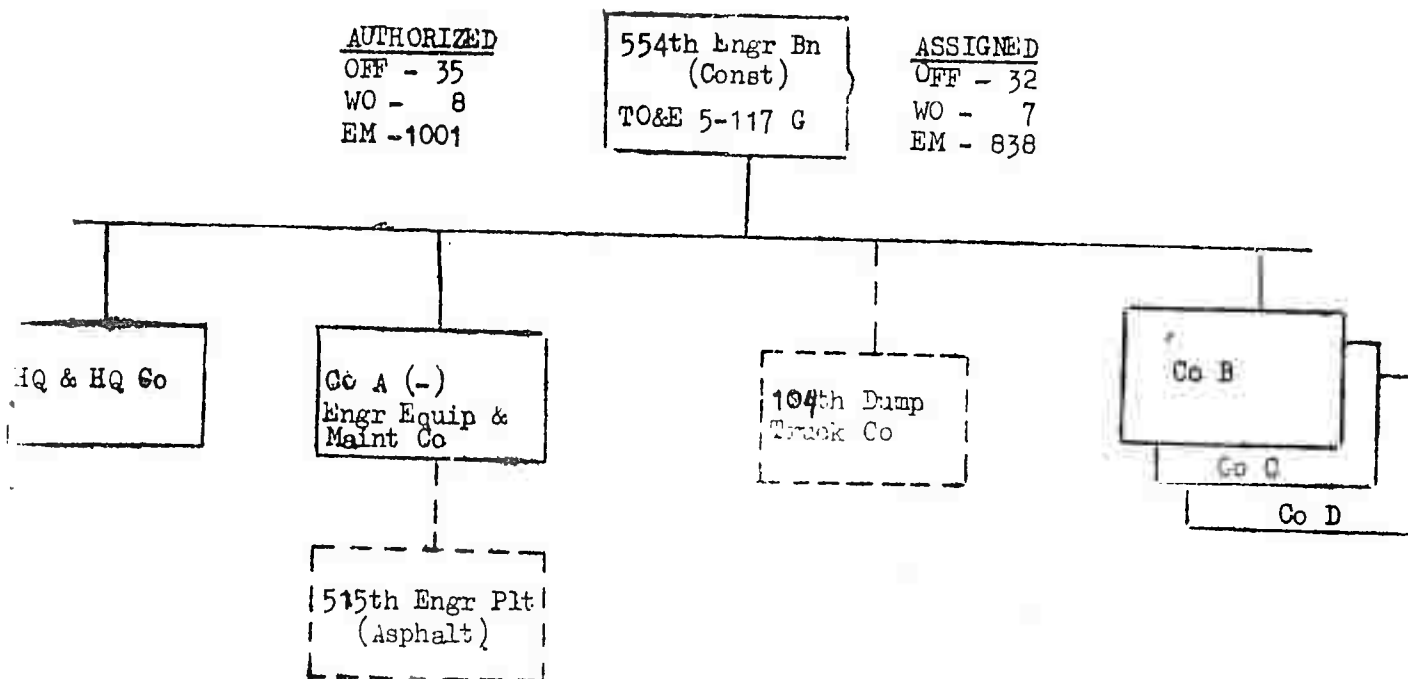
FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:



C. L. SHORTT
CPT, AGC
Asst AG

**Inclosure 1 to 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction) Operational
Report - Lessons Learned for Quarterly Period Ending 31 October 1968**

ORGANIZATION CHART



- NOTES: 1. Quarry section of Co A, 554th Engr Bn (Const) is attached to 588th Engr Bn (Cbt)
2. Attached Unit:

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Security Classification

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author)		2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	
HQ, OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310		Unclassified	
		2b. GROUP	
3. REPORT TITLE			
Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)			
4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and inclusive dates)			
Experiences of unit engaged in counterinsurgency operations, 1 Aug - 31 Oct 1968			
5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name)			
CO, 554th Engineer Battalion (Construction)			
6. REPORT DATE		7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES	7b. NO. OF REFS
9 November 1968		17	
8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO.		9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
b. PROJECT NO.		684164	
c. N/A		9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)	
d.			
10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT			
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY	
N/A		OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310	
13. ABSTRACT			

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